

# The Free Man's Awakening

by oliness

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Summary: A continuation of Half-Life from the end of Episode 2. Told in first-person from Gordon's perspective. Gordon and Alyx hunt the Borealis. What does it contain?

## 1. Chapter 1: The Mourning Forest

**\*\*\_A.N. C\_\*\***ontinues right from the end of episode two until a short while after the discovery of the Borealis. I try to give characterization to Gordon - show his thoughts and feelings.

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><p><em>"Don't Leave Me..."<em>

All I could do was cry with her. Alyx was hunched over the body of the man I respected most, her eyes blood-red with weeping. She had lost her father Eli to the hated Combine, to the cruel force which had destroyed our world. I went to hug her, but broke down and wept. My mind went back to Black Mesa, to after the experiment, when I was dazed from the collapse of the facility and was awed at viewing alien life.

I remember his words to me: "Gordon, you're alive! Thank God for that hazard suit!". I immediately felt comforted, that even though I was unsure if I would survive I knew I had a friend always. And now he was dead. Briefly I wondered if I could go on. I could only ever remember seeing chaos, destruction, and killing. Had I done any good in my life?

Kleiner, Magnusson, and the others stood round as a Vortigaunt dug a resting place for Eli. He was buried within White Forest, just beyond the ground where I had destroyed the Striders. I said nothing. I felt an urge to appear strong, and did not want to show any vulnerability in public. While I had doubted myself after his death, I knew that others saw me as the one Free Man; so I wanted to appear unaffected

by any tragedy. This seemed to me to be the way to give strength and comfort to the whole Resistance - I could look beyond what was happening, view it all as a dream and a play. I thought of that enigmatic man in a suit - who Eli had called a mutual friend - how he walked above all these things. He was who I wanted to be - a true Free Man: transcendent, superior to the flow of events.

Alyx spoke first: "Oh daddy, I loved you each day of my life. I treasured your protection, your safe and warm presence. Without you, life is dead. Bye dad, rest forever".

Then Kleiner came to speak. I admired Kleiner. His mind was mostly in the highest reaches of scientific knowledge - and he found it hard to come down from that plane - yet he could inspire when he needed to. "Eli, my dear old man, may an as yet unknown dimension - unknown to us that is, not of course to you - may that dimension receive your spirit. Dwell there in peace, friend. You are a great boon to everyone. A story was told in ancient India of a good man who was accidentally sent to hell. In his presence, the unhappy beings found joy and hell itself became a paradise. May the same occur across the borderworlds that you have travelled. We are lit by your example, dear Eli. Blessings to you."

Magnusson, wisely, did not speak. I disliked Magnusson. While he was devoted to the Resistance and had great scientific ability, he lacked entirely, as far as I could tell, any good human qualities. Whenever I was around him I felt like informing the Combine of his whereabouts then making sure he was assimilated into the Overwatch and dispatched to an off-world assignment.

So Eli was buried, and the Vortigaunts sang a haunting tune as he was lowered down. I felt my dedication to the group strengthening, as if his death was bonding us tighter together. There was much still to do, and through my sadness I felt a determination to carry on. I was sure Alyx felt the same - she had been grieving and weeping uncontrollably, but after the funeral she seemed stoic and sure of herself. I longed to protect her, to be the safe presence that Eli had been. I had a love for her which felt fatherly. I wanted to lead and support her, to guard her as if she was my own precious girl.

## 2. Chapter 2: Search and Plunder

Alyx, Kleiner, Magnusson and I discussed what to do about the Borealis. Alyx repeated that it was her Eli's dying wish to destroy it, and she felt duty bound to follow her father. Kleiner argued that the only way to guarantee we could be safe from the Combine was to have as much technology as we can. That destroying the ship would be to stick our heads in the sand. What use would that be? If the Combine develop portal technology as powerful as we had in Black Mesa then we're sitting ducks.

Magnusson impressed me. He showed real concern for others at last. He said that even if we are safe on earth, countless other beings throughout the universes are enslaved to the Combine. And the technology on the Borealis might give us the ability to go to their aid, to fight the oppressors to the last and defeat them. We must risk everything to liberate the galaxies, and end the terrible rule of our malefactors.

I was convinced by this. I had not said anything yet, as I wanted to hear all sides of the argument and consider my views. But I had always believed in technological progress; that any form of Luddism was wrong. So I spoke in front of them:

"Eli wanted the Borealis destroyed. He held himself responsible for causing the devastation of earth after Black Mesa. Therefore he resolved never to again use the most dangerous technology for fear it would be our final destruction. I understand how he felt. I was there with him. I directly caused the devastation back then. I know his worries.

But I am haunted by something else. Just before Breen's death he said to me 'Doctor Freeman, you have destroyed so much. What is it, exactly, that you have created?'. And I had no reply. I couldn't think of any positive contribution I had made. All I had done was to kill thousands, and destroy research centers. That wasn't what I ever wanted. From a young age, as I studied science and quantum physics every hour I could, I longed to help mankind. To take us beyond our present limits, to reach the distant galaxies and conquer the universe. I dreamed of us having our own civilization across every world in the sky.

If we do not still aspire to this, our humanity will decay and crumble. We must not let the dangers be our only guide. To be ruled by risk is to live in fear. We are nobler than this. Let us use the Borealis. Let us become the greatest beings in existence. As a force for good. We can be heroes to every species that today hides in terror of the Combine. The multiverse needs us. So far as we can discern, it is only us together with our Vortigaunt friends who are still free. We are the last hope. The lives of all depend on us. Take up the fight and win."

Once I had said this, Alyx looked down, seemingly lost in thought. Finally she said "ok Gordon, you understood my dad. He was a good man and wanted what was best. I just cannot live with the guilt of betraying him. Betraying his dying command to me."

Kleiner quickly responded, his voice showing exasperation "my dear, old Eli has passed beyond us. You are grown now, an adult, independent. You are not a baby bound to obey daddy forever."

I thought that was unnecessarily cruel of Kleiner. I had never heard him insult or hurt another human before. It upset Alyx. Tears welled in her eyes. She sat down and spoke softly "I know Isaac. But it's who I've always been. I was never rebellious when I was young. I was a good girl and did whatever dad asked. I loved him. It's hard to explain but he... I don't know who I am if I am not following him and don't have his support".

"Sorry Alyx", said Kleiner. "That was wrong of me to say. It is good that you are so respectful of your father. I hate the feeling too of betraying him, of going against his memory. When I die I would prefer you all to do exactly as I command, hehe. But the Borealis, the power it may have! Teleportation technology to let us see new worlds. Weapons greater than the whole Combine armoury. It's fascinating! Who knows what lies in that ship? It will be enough to excite the entire Black Mesa science team. Or would, that is, of course, if there were any still left other than us four and Judith. Oh dear, I've gone and

made an insensitive remark again. Never mind, never mind. There is an entire terabyte of data from the satellite to analyze. I'll go and do that now."

Kleiner scuttled off. I didn't want to judge him, as I'm sure my social skills are worse than his. Trying to influence things, I put my arm around Alyx and said "let's do this now. Back to the helicopter. You, me, and a Vortigaunt. We'll find the Borealis."

"Right Gordon. If all of you want to, we're a team. The majority rules, you know. My dad's outvoted. We're heading for the Arctic!"

That excited smile came back. Here was the girl I loved. The sassy, zestful Alyx. Whose spirit reminded me of what we were fighting for. When I saw it like that - her life and luster against the soulless Combine - I knew what I believed in. Humanity was the better species, our survival mattered. Dr. Breen, I am creating a world where there can be many like Alyx Vance. That shall pay for the destruction.

### 3. Chapter 3: To the Frozen Ship

Alyx, myself and a Vortigaunt named Zabad flew the helicopter towards the Arctic. I had bad memories of choppers, having nearly been killed by one before reaching Black Mesa East and then fighting countless Gunships. Seeing the earth from above, though, shook me far more.

It was dead. Where was life? Outside White Forest so little remained that seemed like the earth I had known. At Innsbruck I explored the countries of Europe. They were beautiful. There had been thousands of woods, rivers, meadows, castles, universities, towns. Now there was gray voidness. The cities we saw were ruins, the castles were heaps of stone. The forests were burned, the streams were dry. It was all taken; lost from our race forever. I felt a rage grow against the Combine. Had it really fallen to me to annihilate them and avenge our world?

Alyx was flying the chopper. She was still grieving, so I did not want to speak to her too much. The coordinates showed that the Borealis was outside what had been Norway. As we flew closer, we saw below us several Striders. Their undead, skeletal bodies walked beside the Arctic coast. Most of the water had been drained, yet there were mounds and boulders of ice beside the rocky land. Was the Borealis hidden here? Had it been captured already, and its power under the Combine's fist?

The Vortigaunt Zabad wanted to attack the Striders. "The portal the Magnusson gave us. On this vehicle. We take the Magnusson's devices and destroy the Combine. The Free Man can attach them and the Alyx Vance can shoot."

"No, Zabad" Alyx replied. "We can't risk being spotted. There may be dozens of Combine troops in the area. I won't let what happened to my dad happen to us".

"That's right, Alyx." I supported her caution. "Striders here means Advisers. And Overwatch patrols. It's not going to be safe for

us."

"The Free Man is a fighter", said Zabad. "It is the Alyx Vance who fears. The Free Man has the courage of our greatest warrior. He must conjure it".

"I like a good fight, Zabad." Alyx had her old self in there. "But the trigger-happy rebels are first to the battle and first to the funeral."

We avoided the sight of the Striders and reached the location that matched the coordinates we had been given. The Borealis was supposed to be here, but we saw nothing. The sea had been drained, and the ground looked as if it had been farmed into an arid and sterile wilderness. So we travelled north, to where the earth was still frozen and ice-filled. Maybe the ship was trapped under the snow; safe against the Combine's search parties.

We continued into the Arctic when Judith appeared on the cockpit videoscreen. "We have reached the Project and are happy to wait for your arrival. You are close to us, travel in a north-easterly direction and you should see a snowmound that is larger than the others. The ship is inside here, we have cleared enough of the top for you to land."

After another hour's flying - in which there was only clear, white and sun-reflecting snow - we saw at last the deck of the Borealis. The chopper came down at the front of the ship, and as we climbed out Judith greeted us. "Alyx! Gordon! Wonderful to see you both after those adventures in the Citadel, huh? Hehehe."

"I am glad you made it here as well, Dr. Mossman." Alyx always did her best to avoid a public with anyone, but I was sure she would never consider Judith a friend. "What's in this ship? We've braved the freezing weather it sure as hell better be worth it."

"It's incredible." I could recognize a scientist by their excitement. If they were genuine, they loved discovery. To find something new, to learn what had never been found before - this kept any real scientist alive. "Their portal technology is decades ahead of ours or the Combine's. They have developed a teleportation mapping device. It can take images and create maps of any location in any universe. With this we will be able to map where all Combine forces are stationed on earth. We can map Xen, map the Combine Overworld. This will give our troops huge advantage."

"How does it work, Dr. Mossman?" I was a scientist to my core. I loved discovery, and I loved understanding all its components.

"The destination portals attract light rays which are then transmitted to the source portals. These can be stored directly or combined with AI software to create maps. The portals are so small a human can't travel in them. Information-only portals."

"Anything else?", Alyx asked.

"They discovered a new dimensional world. Like Black Mesa found Xen, they have found a planet. An extraordinary one."

"Is it like earth?"

"More like Mars. It has that light red tint on its surface. But the incredible thing is, its ground contains volumes of crystals purer than the ones which were supplied to Black Mesa. Crystals of greater quality than the one which caused the Cascade. Aperture Science researched their properties, and discovered that they could generate powers equal to that of the Nihilanth."

I was shocked and exhilarated by this. That being I had faced on Xen. Its might, its electricity, its telepathy - in our hands. "The Vortigaunts were enslaved until I destroyed three crystals protecting the Nihilanth and killed him. Could the crystals give us the ability to take control of Combine forces? Free beings from their grip, or cause them all to fight each other?"

"Who knows, Gordon?" Judith replied. "We need to experiment. It will take time but if we deliver this knowledge to White Forest they can develop it. It's wonderful the science contained here. This is going to be our greatest work."

Zabad had been quiet for most of the way, but hearing of how his race was enslaved stirred him. "For many aeons we have sought this. The destruction of our rulers, the burning of our bonds forever. We battle and die that each of us may be free."

Alyx seemed the least moved. She had looked to the ground throughout our discussion, as if she couldn't participate but restrained herself from openly opposing us. "Alyx," I asked. "Are you troubled by this?"

"My father worried about exactly what we are considering. Should anyone have the power of the Combine, the Nihilanth? Desire to control others. The cause of all tyranny, right there."

"But it's us fighting back and winning." Judith's face flushed. There was a passion in her, a drive to succeed. "Just because you never respected scientific equipment doesn't mean others won't use it responsibly."

"You dare lecture me about behaving responsibly! I never betrayed my people to the Combine!"

"I only ever did what helped us. I'm a servant of science and progress, not a coddled adolescent."

"You're a reformed traitor, Judith. Just be grateful."

I loved physics because it was logical and clean, without the mess of personal conflicts. I wanted to defend Alyx, but not make anything worse. I never knew how to resolve problems between people. I was the stereotype of the antisocial nerd. This frustrated me more and more as I got older. Luckily Zabad played peacemaker. "The Alyx Vance and the Mossman argue. We who know the Vortessence feel each other's very self, and hear the thoughts of all our race. We have no hate. Be like the Free Man. Calm with all."

I was flattered that Zabad considered me calm and amicable. If I was the friendly guy of the group, if I was popular with all, I'd feel a rare sense of achievement. I wanted Alyx's friendship most, so I measured my words and tried to support her. "You're right to worry

about the risk, Alyx. Any of us are corruptible. We can't foresee the consequences of using this."

"Dad had his darker moments, and in them he'd wonder whether we'd be kinder than the Combine if we had their power. Should we really chance us being as bad?"

"We can't be worse, surely? They probably rule most of the planets out there. Might as well see if we can do a better job." I wanted more than anything for Alyx to agree with me, to see me as possessing a wisdom like her father. And not have to debate with her. But I believed in the mission, and I wasn't going to abandon it for anything. As hard as it was, not even to please her.

"Ok Gordon but you better live up to your last name. I'm expecting freedom to ring across every dimension by the time we're done."

#### 4. Chapter 4: We are still Hostiles

"Attention all protection forces. Non-compliant individuals detected. Deploy, engage, dissect"

The Overwatch Voice. I shivered. It had come to announce more killing. Which of us would be alive after this latest round?

"We must protect the research on the Project." Judith thought of scientific equipment first, and only then about the people using it.

I didn't hesitate to bark instructions: "Alyx, grab the rockets and Magnussons. Judith, take the research we need into the chopper."

"I shall go ahead of the Free Man and charge on the Overwatch. Chur lung companum Taar!" I'd call him Zabad the Brave from now on. He leapt off the front of the hull, burying half his legs in the snow beneath.

Just then we saw a Dropship ahead. It was about half a mile in front of us. Dropships tend to land out of weapon-range, then leave for more troops. Zabad jumped from the snow and ran towards the soldiers.

"Look Gordon, that way." Alyx had seen Striders arriving from our east. "Maybe four minutes and we're in their range."

We lowered down the Magnusson Device portal, the Gravity Gun, and a rocket launcher, then jumped into the snow. It was the most bitter cold I had known; even worse than the environment on Xen. The chill seemed to pierce even my Hazard Suit. How could the sun be there, clear with no clouds, and it be colder than the borderworld?

I pulled a Magnusson Device onto my Gravity Gun and ran for the nearest Strider. I needed to keep a quick pace, destroy one, dash back, grab another device and destroy the next one. If they got too close they'd blow our chopper and we'd be stranded in the Arctic.

The first shots came, landing only a yard away; yet I kept my pace until I was close enough. Aim at its head. Pull the primary trigger.

Switch to the Magnum and destroy. I had knocked down a dozen of these in White Forest

Estimate the arc of the shot. Fire the device. And keep running. A single headshot and I'm dead.

I propelled the Magnusson towards the Strider. It knocked the front leg, then fell into the snow.

Missed. First shot a failure. We now had maybe three minutes before they could blast the ship.

I ran back to the device portal. "Go again Gordon, hit 'em all!", Alyx shouted, before firing a rocket at the soldiers on the other side. I grabbed a device and repeated my move: run to the right, dodge the shots, stop to aim.

I got near enough. Avoided maybe twenty cannon shots. I prepared the angle to fire, when a pulse blast collided with my left ankle.

The Hazard Suit can protect against these, but the force knocked me into the snow. I spat out a mouthful of ice, and held firm on the Gravity Gun. I fired, landing the Magnusson on the Strider's surface. A blow from the Magnum and it went down.

There were three more coming, each of them firing at me. I ran back, and briefly viewed the other battle. The Dropship came to land more troops. Alyx aimed a perfect shot at the carrier section. I don't know how, but the entire thing blew itself into a mess of flaming debris. We were winning. I just had to do my part.

Judith called from the deck: "Everything's loaded. I'm starting the engines." Just down to me then. Hit the Striders and we're safe.

I ran to the left this time, then diagonally forwards to the right. The second one had just passed the corpse of the first when I stopped and took my shot. Hit. I pulled my Magnum and missed three times. Carelessness. A pulse blast scraped the edge of my Hazard Suit, but I wasn't hurt so fired again. Gotcha. Six bones down, six to go.

Alyx and Zabad had by this time defeated the soldiers and come to assist me. "Go Gordon, land some more and I'll finish the job." It gladdened me that I was fighting with Alyx. If I am to die here, may it be by her side.

"I shall attract their gaze. The Free Man must shoot unhindered." Zabad was still without fear. We were going to win this, how could we not?

Running back, I went to the right and Zabad to the left. The furthest Strider fired at him, the nearest at me. Sprinting past its cannon I got in range. Aim and shoot. The angle was correct, the Magnusson attached. A bullet came from Alyx and we had one left.

Back now, last time. Judith called to us again: "The helicopter's ready. As soon as that last Strider goes down I'll be with you." Onto the Gravity Gun went another Magnusson. Zabad had drawn the Strider's movement towards the exploded Dropship, putting more distance between it and the Borealis.



Towards him we went. I watched his agility and swift-winged movement. He would be at least two feet away from every blast. A leap, a duck, a jump. The Strider had a discernible sense of frustration; it just couldn't get the Vortigaunt. I only needed to not be noticed. Some more yards of sprinting, and I have him.

I got close, perhaps riskily close, but if this shot worked we had won. Aim above the pulse cannon and shoot. It landed. One pistol round from Alyx and the skeleton crashed before us. I made a large snowball and threw it at the falling beast. A brief celebration, yet well deserved. All of us were safe. Including Alyx. Alyx had made it unharmed. Thankfulness for this overwhelmed me. We hugged, and I felt a tear of hers roll onto my cheek.

"We survived Gordon. Are we unbeatable? If you are, I want to be. But only if you are."

My love for another human shone more now than at any time since my mother's death. I was unused to close relationships with women, having never had any success before. But she, this Alyx, this daughter of a fellow physicist, she was making me a man of sensitivity and emotion.

The chopper appeared overhead. It flew just above us, then gained both speed and height. Judith waved from the cockpit, and flew back the way we had come. She was leaving alone - letting us be stranded here.

## 5. Chapter 5: Through the Cold

"That bitch! That treacherous, deceitful whore! Worse than the Combine."

"You know where you stand with them at least."

"I knew she could never be trusted. She's hated me from when she started at the lab. If we ever get back there a whole round of ammo's going in her skull."

Zabad pressed his palms, and sighed ruefully "The Vorts are united. We never fight fellows. Yet the humans bicker."

"Too right," I said. "We're glad to have your support, but I can't believe you always like us."

"The Free Man has our perfect admiration, as does the Alyx Vance."

"Will we be buried in the damn Arctic?" Alyx looked as if she would shoot anything just to relieve frustration. "If I die, it's going to be against the Combine, not the weather."

"Let's climb back onto the ship and see if there's anything." The cold was getting inside my suit and I badly wanted shelter. "Why do you think she did it? Just so we don't mess with her precious equipment?"

"Maybe she wants the power for herself. My guess is that she'll say we died out here and develop the research. Then she'll betray Dr.

Kleiner and seize control of the base. I remember her saying that if it had been her in the test chamber instead of you, she'd have gone on to study the Nihilanth, not just kill it."

"So she wants to enslave others? Is she really that bad?"

"Either that or she's going to help the Combine. God my dad was right. No species can be trusted with total power."

Zabad raised himself to full height, and opened his central eye to the limit. "We who were bound to the yoke of monsters; chained on Xen and shackled here, are trustworthy. We shall only act for freedom, to let all live in the open glory of the Combine's doom."

Alyx wasn't having it. "You're wonderful speakers, you Vorts, but noone is ever to be trusted with these abilities. If we manage to get back to White Forest, we're destroying everything."

I tried to offer hope: "Mossman's one bad person, but there's still us if we make it. Do you not trust yourself? Me? Dr. Kleiner?"

"I have to go with my father, Gordon. I see now that he was wise, was right. Everything he's warned of has happened. Let's go down to the lower decks and see if there's anything."

The inside of the ship was like one of the abandoned science labs at Black Mesa. Computers with smashed monitors and the glass littering the floor. Papers full of scribbled equations and portal diagrams over every desk. After we had gone down two levels the power wouldn't work, and everyone relied on my flashlight. We thoroughly searched each level. Our hope was that Judith had overlooked a radio that could let us contact White Forest.

The bottom deck had clearly been long-abandoned. The floor was a pile of old computers, research instruments, and broken tables. We started stacking them, when Zabad noticed a small portal device. "Here, this may take us to the borderworld."

"Let's take it to the top and try to plug it in," I replied. "Bring up a couple of computers too; we might be able to program a jump to the base."

Alyx got the portal running. She found enough equipment parts to stick everything together and allow us to go to Xen. One of the computer systems had a map similar to what Judith had mentioned. With it we specified White Forest as our destination, and it showed us the area of the borderworld we'd have to go through before taking a second portal home.

All three of us crossed to the other universe. It had been twenty years since I was last here. The floating islands still followed their orbits, the healing pools remained in the center, but there was no life. The glowing portal which would bring us back appeared just a leap away, on a stationary platform nearby.

"Last time I was here I was a champion long-jumper," I said. "I had a Hazard Suit attachment which made all this easy."

"I'll go first then. I'm getting to that portal and finding Mossman." Alyx went to the edge and checked the distance between the islands.

"Would be nice if D0g was still here to throw us over."

"Yeah. But still, why not let somebody experienced go first?" I did a running jump and got across. I worried that my question seemed arrogant, but I wanted to impress Alyx.

"If you can do it, I can do it better." She did a brief sprint, then leapt across easily. "Yeah, I'm not too bad. First thing we do when we've taken out the Combine is re-establish some sports contests."

All of us were beaten though. Zabad took a brief run, jumped higher and further than either of us and, without landing on the island, went straight through the portal.

Back in White Forest we ran to the base. Resistance members saw us and let us inside.

"How did you get back?", said one. "Dr. Mossman got here about half hour ago and told us you were taken away by the Combine. There was going to be a ceremony next to Dr. Vance's grave."

Alyx went livid and red, her hands becoming tight fists. "Where is she? Take us to Mossman. We have to see her now."

Down we went inside the base. Everyone who saw us looked shocked and open-mouthed. As we were heading down Kleiner spotted us.

"You escaped? I can't believe it. How? You must have the most fascinating story to tell!"

Alyx softened after hearing him. "A nasty one, Dr. Kleiner. But you know it feels good to be back, I have to say."

"Oh my Lord, how wonderful! I never imagined I'd see you again."

It was Judith. She came from behind us and saw us first.

"When you were taken away I was overcome with worry. To have you back, here again, it's overwhelming."

"You never stop lying, Mossman." Alyx's fury returned as soon as she heard Judith's voice. "But it's it for you now."

"What happened?" Kleiner asked. "Dr. Mossman told us that Overwatch captured you three, and she was lucky to escape in the helicopter."

"She's always been a spiteful liar." Alyx's left fist was gripping her pistol. I felt she would snap within two minutes. "We defeated the Overwatch troops then she left in the helicopter without us."

"No, never. I thought you had been taken. As you must know, our friendship and collaboration is my life."

"I can't bear to hear you anymore." Alyx, with a speed as quick as the men of the Wild West, pulled her pistol and fired two shots into Judith's neck. As she fell backwards, Alyx ran to her head and stamped it onto the ground.

Kleiner was so shocked that he was immediately sick. My heart started to beat intensely, and a sense of fear came over my body. It was irrational, yes, for this to leave me so aghast. I had killed many before. Alyx had killed many before. Yet this act hurt me with a rawness that the long days of fighting had failed to.

"I've done what I have to do." Alyx wasn't about to repent. "What I should have done in Black Mesa East. Traitors like her die with the Combine."

"It's justâ€¦" I felt a revulsion in me against what she'd done, even though I knew we couldn't have worked with Judith anymore. "I mean. We're starting to kill each other."

"Gordon, she was one lie and betrayal after another. A disgrace to us. It's hard to kill your own kind, of course, but justice must be done."

Kleiner had started to recover and walked over to Mossman's body. "Goodbye my dear. You were a skilled and knowledgeable physicist. And the research you have found is the most promising I've seen sinceâ€¦"

"Dr. Kleiner! We have to destroy that research. She had to die. And the research must be burned."

I tried to calm Alyx down: "Let's sit for a while and quieten ourselves. We can discuss later what to do with the research. It's best not to make decisions when our emotions are so high."

"No Gordon." As Alyx said this, I gave a worried look towards her pistol. "My father was right all along. The Borealis technology must be destroyed. Or we'll destroy ourselves. You think there's a bad situation between us now? Wait till we get the power to enslave who we like."

Kleiner took off his glasses and wiped his eyes. "I'm going back to my lab. I need to sit alone and think. Like I did when I was getting my PhD. I never have that time to think anymore."

"Good idea," I said. "I'm finding a room by my own and considering everything through."

I found an unused lab and sat down. So I loved her? Yes I did love her. Her kindness, her sensitivity, her sweetness and goodness. Then she shot that poor woman and broke her bones. I had wanted to be the father she had lost, but how could I give any guidance? I love you Alyx. Even thinking of giving you up is too... cutting. But being happy with you now?

Just then I felt my body hold still. My vision blurred, the sounds from outside stopped. A ghost-like briefcase appeared, and then a human figure. It was the suited man.

"Good afternoon, Dr. Freeman. I ask for the customary forgiveness for my latest imposition on your activities, but I have been asked by myâ€¦ employers, to request a favor from you. It is clear that you are the most loyal and... stoic-minded investment that we have ever made. Unfortunately, the child I rescued is becomingâ€¦ unruly. And,

as you are a permanent worker under my management I must delegate to you the authority to... discipline her.

Do not let the research be wiped out, Dr. Freeman. There is no need to tell you how unsatisfying it would be to watch a scientist destroy the most exciting discovery that the human race has ever created. And I know how you desire to be a creator, Dr. Freeman. You are, at heart, more than your weapons.

Please complete the project. I promise you that, once this is accomplished, all things shall be clear."

End  
file.